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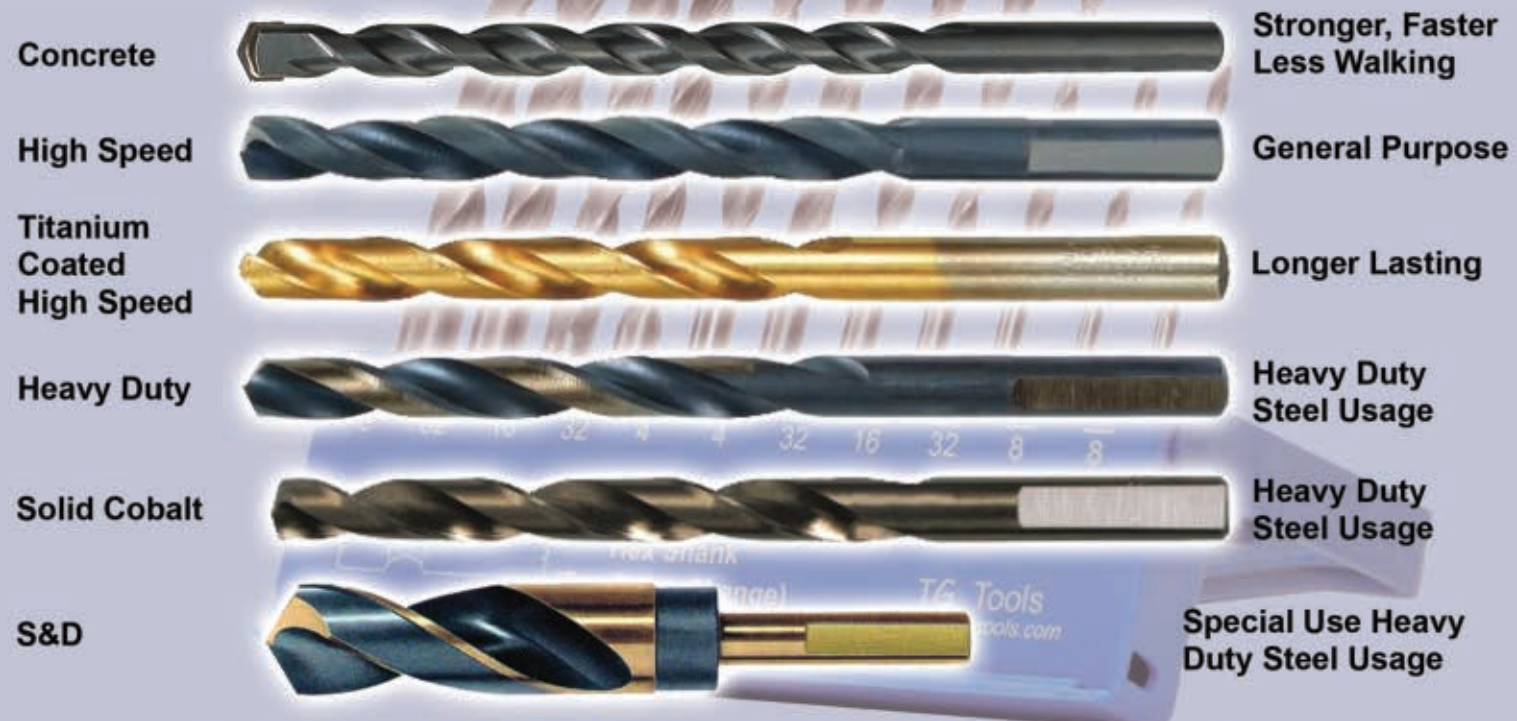

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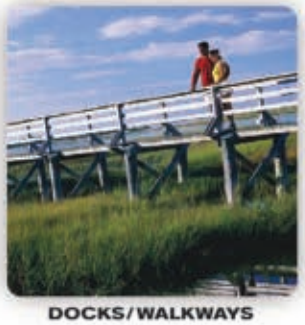

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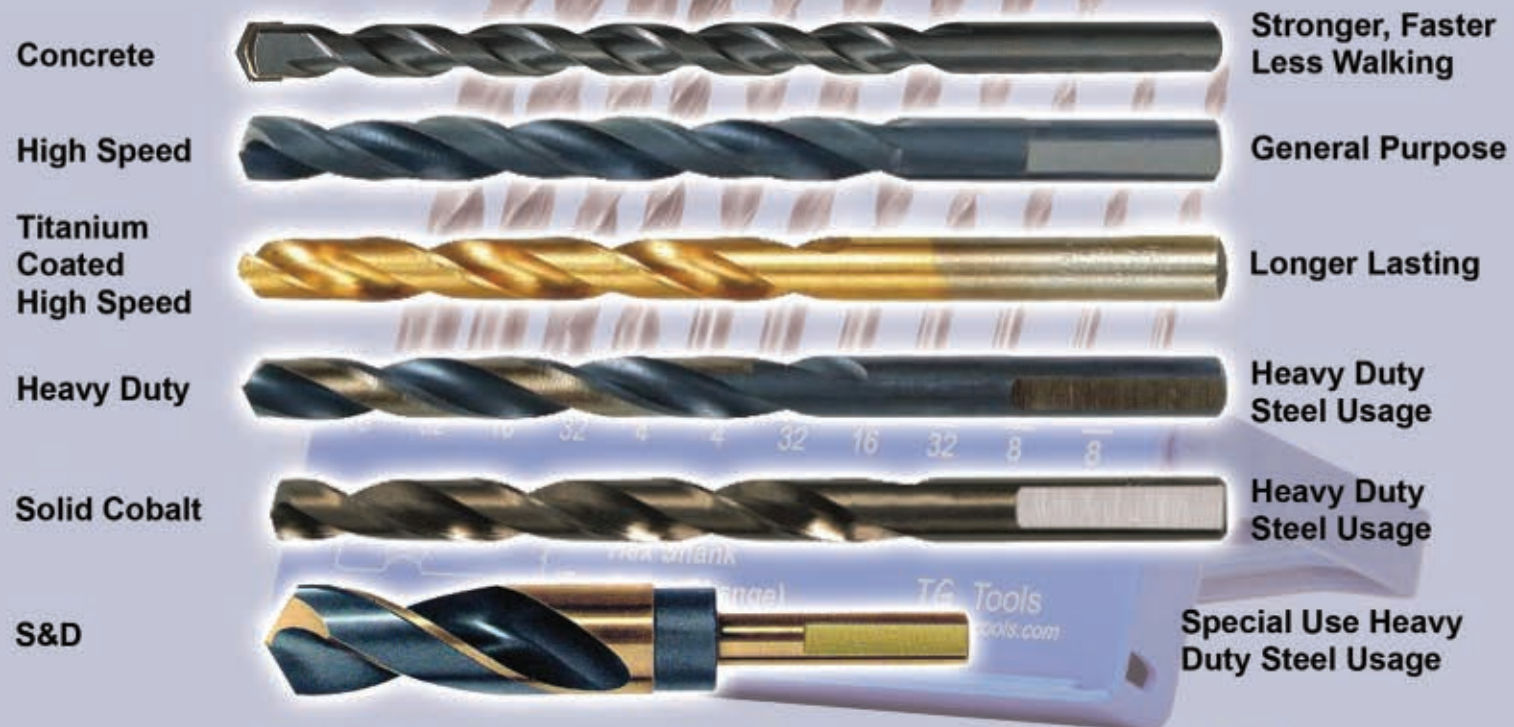

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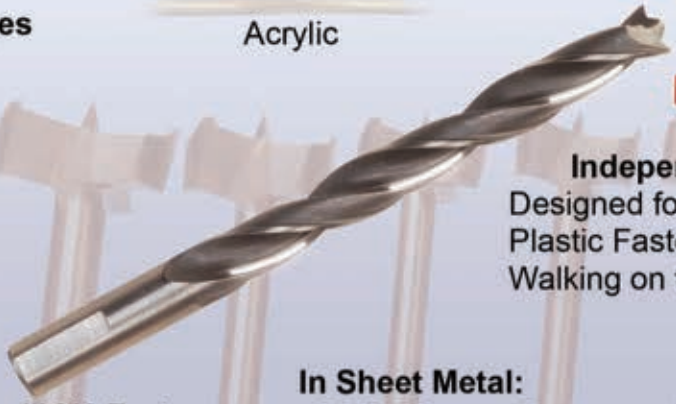

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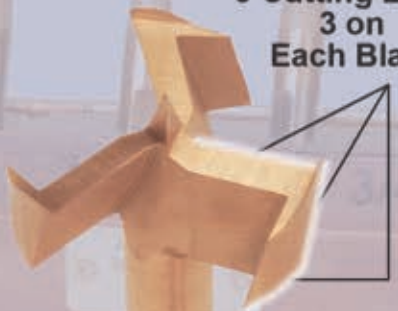

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Q. *My wife drove the car into the garage wall and did a lot of damage. She managed not to completely drive through the wall, but the drywall is crunched and the studs are cracked and bent. Luckily there is no electrical or plumbing running through that part of the wall. What's the best way to fix this?*

A. If the studs are cracked, they are no good. You need to remove the drywall from both sides of the wall to completely assess the damage. Make sure the bottom sill plate did not move. If it did, you'll likely have to replace the entire sill plate. Otherwise, you need to replace all of the broken studs and then reinstall the drywall. However, the garage wall is most likely a load-bearing wall. To replace the studs you will need to build a temporary support wall to support the overhead weight while replacing the studs. If you don't have experience working on load-bearing walls, then it's probably safer to hire a professional to do the work.

Q. *I need to install fiberglass insulation batts in the drafty crawlspace of the "fix 'er upper" house I recently purchased. How do I do this?*

A. First, install the insulation in the transition where the foundation wall meets the floor joists. Cut the batts large enough so you can pack the insulation between the joists and wall just tightly enough to prevent it from falling out. Next, install batts between the floor joists so that the vapor barrier is facing upward. You can support the batts from below by fastening chicken wire or insulation stays onto the joists. Install the batts so they are long enough to drape from the mudsill, down the foundation wall and about 2 feet on the floor. Hold the draping insulation in place by nailing a 1-by board over the insulation and into the mudsill. Only tack the nails deep enough to hold the insulation in place while only slightly compressing it. If there is no vapor barrier covering the dirt floor, then install 6-mil plastic over the entire surface, anchoring it with bricks.

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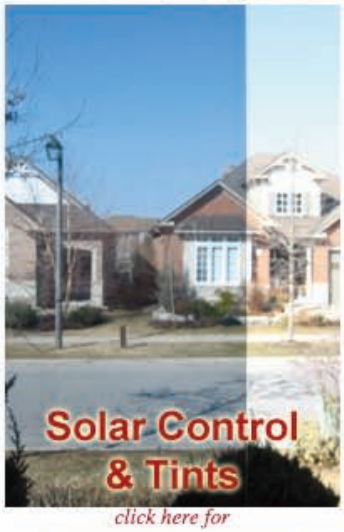

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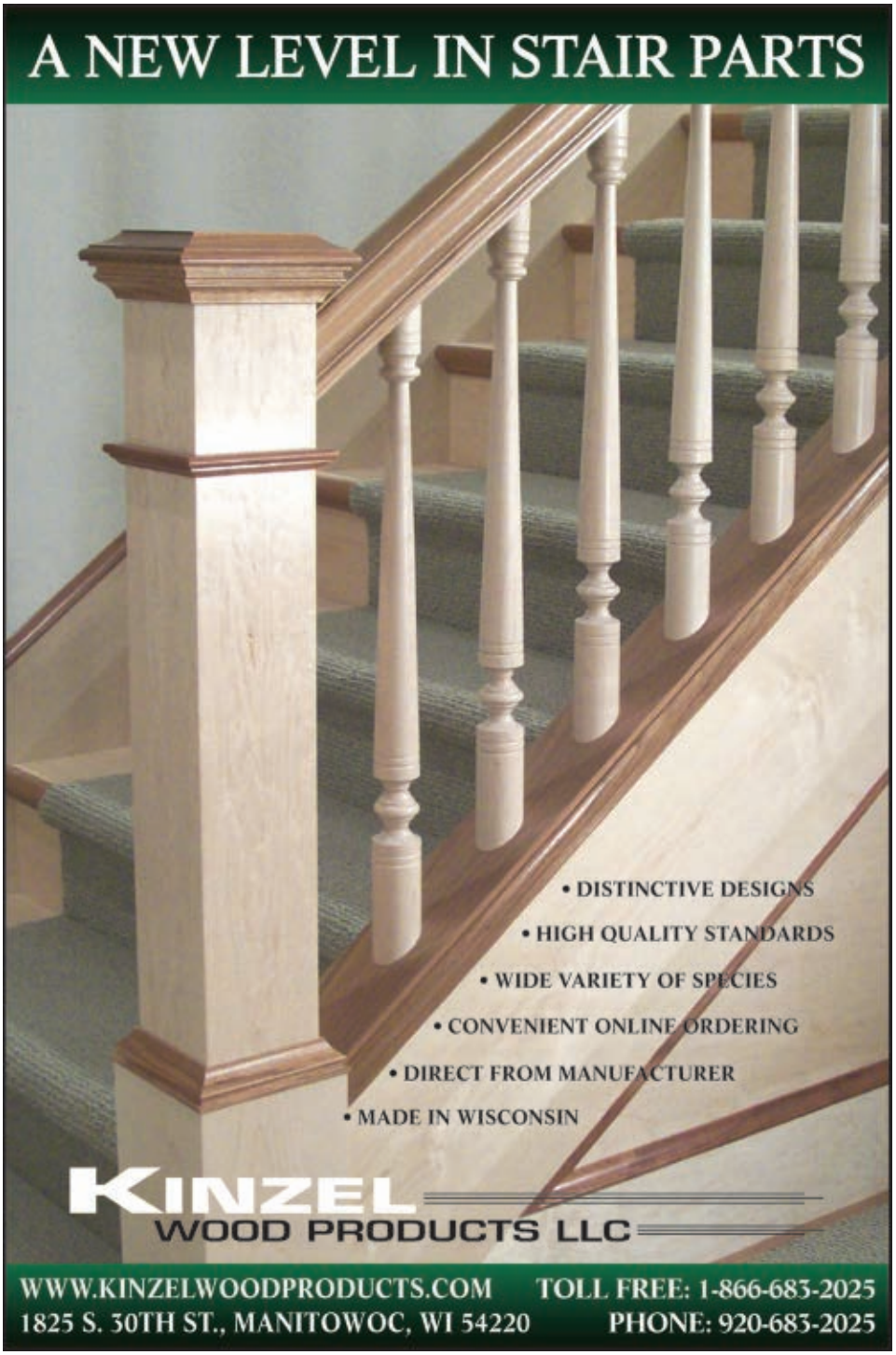
Q: *I'd like to finish my basement, which currently has bare concrete block walls, but I'd prefer to avoid drywall because of all the mudding and sanding involved. Is there an easier option?*

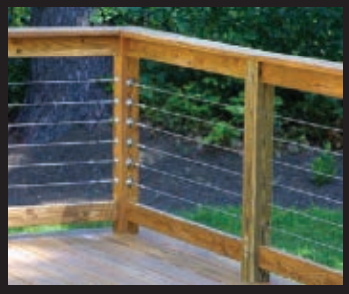
A: Installing 4-by-8 sheets of paneling should be a relatively easy way to go. You'll first need to cover the walls with a 4-mil vapor barrier, held in place with horizontal 1-by-3 furring strips spaced 2 feet on center. Nail vertical 1-by-3's between the horizontals to provide a solid nailing surface for the edges of the panels. Shim the furring strips to keep the surface in the same plane and avoid dips in the wall. Cut rigid foam insulation to fit snugly between the furring strips. Then, to meet fire code, you should cover the insulation with sheets of 1/2-inch drywall—but don't worry, there's no need to finish the drywall joints with compound. Make sure your paneling is designed for use in below-grade applications, and acclimate the panels for at least 72 hours in the basement before installing them over the drywall.

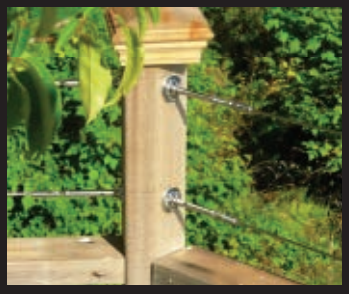


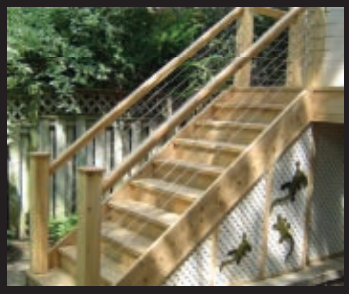
Q: *Is there any way to stop condensation of a toilet tank? Water beads up on the tank and drips onto the bathroom floor, and I'm tired of wiping up little puddles.*

A: Many home centers sell toilet-tank insulation kits that utilize polystyrene tank liners. You'll need to shut off the water supply, drain the water from the tank, and wipe the inside of the tank dry. Cut the liners to size to match the tank walls and use the supplied adhesive to glue them to the interior walls. The polystyrene should prevent the walls of the tank from becoming so cool that water condenses on the outside. **EHT**

THE Vanguard Cable System







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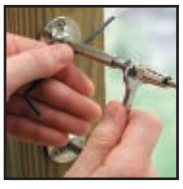
Step 1
Fully seat wire rope.

Step 2
Tighten cone onto receiver



Step 3
Rotate body to tension wire rope.

The Vanguard Cable Kit provides the hardware you need to install the Vanguard Cable System in just three easy steps! Use our online estimator at **www.stainless-steel-direct.com** or drop us a line at 1-866-940-5149 if you have questions.

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Time for Roof Replacement

Synthetic roofing provides a beautiful and durable replacement alternative.

By Kathy Ziprik

Gaping holes and messy leaks are two obvious signs that a roof needs to be replaced. But, sometimes the signs are less obvious. According to experts at DaVinci Roofscapes, there are some "insider tips" for knowing when it's time to replace your roof.

"Certainly if your roof is approaching the end of its life cycle—which is usually 20 to 25 years for asphalt shingles—it's time to think about a new roof," says Ray Rosewall, president and CEO of DaVinci Roofscapes. "However, a calendar shouldn't be the only way you determine if it's time to replace your roof."

According to Rosewall, you will want to seriously start thinking about replacing your roof with a synthetic roof when …

• Your neighbors have new roofs and you want to maintain the value of your home.

• Your neighbors have not added a new roof and you want to increase the resale value of your home.

• Your geographic area has seen an increase in severe weather conditions, (including hail or tornados) that require a stronger roofing material to handle the dramatic weather changes.

• Your existing roof is functional, but has staining that detracts from the look of your home.

• You want to switch to a low-maintenance roof that has a 50-year warranty.

• You don't want to worry about wood rot caused by wood shakes and termites.

• Excessive snow in your area has caused substantial damage to your roof.

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–**Bob Heidenreich**, Owner The Deck Store, Apple Valley, MN

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DaVinci synthetic slate is a fraction of the weight of natural slate.

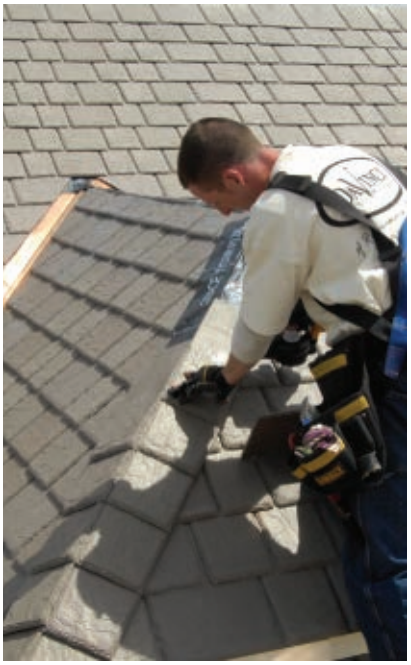
Substrate for DaVinci products must be a solid deck and 15/32" APA-approved plywood or 7/16" approved OSB.

"Too often homeowners wait until their roofs are old and worn out before considering an upgrade," says Rosewall. "Certainly curling, splitting and missing shingles are all warning signs that a roof needs to be replaced. However, with the changing weather patterns in our country combined with the need for homeowners to add value to their properties, consumers should be vigilant about looking for signs of wear along with upgrading their roofs."

Rosewall recommends that, when researching new roof options, homeowners seriously consider low-maintenance synthetic roof systems. "Roofing tiles made from 100 percent pure virgin resins have consistency throughout each tile," says Rosewall. "For DaVinci products, state-of-the-art UV stabilizers are embedded throughout the polymer to create a durable synthetic roofing tile which resists mold, algae, fungus and insects, with virtually no curling, fading and cracking so they're headache-free.

"All DaVinci synthetic roofing tiles are backed with a limited

DaVinci roofing tiles should be installed with copper, stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized nails.



There are two ways to start applying DaVinci Slate Hip and Ridge at the bottom of a hip. The first way is to install a double course of DaVinci Slate Hip and Ridge on the bottom of the hip. The second method for starting a hip will involve mitering the first two slates installed.

50-year warranty, are Class A rated for fire retardance, Class 4 rated for impact resistant and have the highest ratings attainable for straight-line wind testing at 110 mph. Just imagine having a beautiful, virtually maintenance-free slate or shake synthetic roof that adds value to your home while protecting it from severe weather conditions."

Ease of installation is another welcome advantage of synthetic roofing. DaVinci roofing tiles install faster than natural slate. Written and video installation instructions are provided so roofing installers should need no additional training to install DaVinci products. For more information call 1-800-328-4624 or visit www.davinciroofscapes.com. EHT

THE PROS AND CONS OF DIFFERENT ROOFING MATERIALS

Three-tab asphalt shingles are relatively easy to install, inexpensive and look good on ordinary homes. However, they can be a poor environmental choice because they go to a landfill after 20 years, they perform only moderately well, and they don't add any special design appeal to a home.

Real wood shingles or shakes look good on some styles of homes and are moderately priced, however they have little or no resistance to fire or impact unless specially treated. They also attract insects, have relatively poor long-term performance and are generally considered a poor use of our natural resources.

Real slate shingles also provide a good look on some styles of homes and can be considered very long-lasting when installed properly. However, they are very expensive and extremely heavy. During installation you can have a significant amount of waste from cracking and breaking of slate tiles.

Metal roofs are perfect for some very specific home designs. They have a unique look to them, are lightweight and snow can easily slide off of them. Watch out when it rains or hails, though … these roofs are noisy on the inside of the home during storms.

Synthetic roofing tiles provide a high-performance option for homeowners. The tiles come in a variety of styles, including slate and shake, are lightweight and have long-term durability. These tiles are moderately priced and a good environmental choice. While the look complements many home styles, synthetic roofing tiles are moderately priced, so they're not affordable for everyone.

DaVinci Slate may be cut with a utility knife or with a circular saw. Carbide tooth blades are recommended for maximum blade life.

5 Five Lathe Projects You Can Build

By Monte Burch

I'll give you fair warning—woodworking lathes are addictive. Although they appear daunting to first-time users, lathes are fun and can be used to create a wide range of projects. Lathes are commonly used for small projects such as bowls, platters, even pens, as well as furniture parts and cabinetry. Several techniques are used, with two basic turning methods, spindle turning and faceplate turning. The five projects included use both methods as well as duplicate turning, and even a router-based milling machine.

A number of manufacturers make lathes. They range from small to super-size heavy-duty models. The lathe shown is a Craftsman Professional 15-inch, variable speed model.

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Turning blocks can be purchased in a variety of sizes from local sources or mail-order. Cut the blocks to square before turning.

It's a mid-range size, but well designed with cast iron construction for heavy-duty work. Features include a one-horsepower motor to provide plenty of power. The motor maintains full power even at the slowest speed. The headstock swivels 90 degrees, allowing for 20-inch outboard turning. A 24-index stop at 15-degree intervals allows you to use the lathe for router fluting and beading. The lathe has a 37-inch maximum spindle length and 15-inch inside bowl-turning capacity. The lathe comes with a 6- and 12-inch tool rest, spur center, bearing center, 4-inch faceplate and lathe center removal rod. In addition, we added accessories including the Craftsman Bowl-Turning Kit and Craftsman scroll chucks, as well as a work arbor with chuck and key.

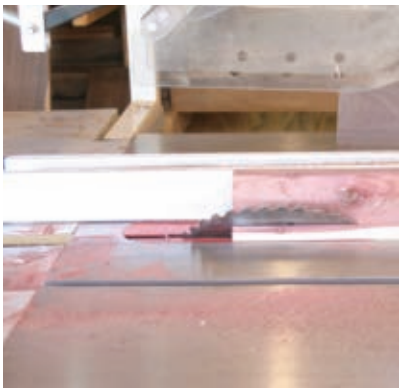
You will also need turning woods, which you may be able to purchase locally. Turning blanks are also available from a number of mail-order sources. Packard Woodworks carries all types of turning supplies from tools to wood to finishes.

Editor's Note: The instructions in this article are for specific woodworking projects. All blueprints are on pages 25 and 28. If you're new to lathe work and want to learn the basics, check out "A Lesson in Lathes" by Monte Burch at www.extremehowto.com.

TURNED "STONE" CANDLE HOLDER

Of course you can't turn stone on a wood lathe, but with today's "textured" spray paints, such as Rustoleum MultiColor Textured Spray Paint, you can easily simulate a stone "sculptured column." The candle holder shown was turned from scraps of red cedar. Any scrap materials you have will work, but softer woods that turn easier and don't show the grain are the best choice. The turning combines both spindle and face-plate turning.

Draw diagonal lines across the ends to locate the centers. Using a fine-toothed handsaw, make cuts in one end following the diagonal lines to about 1/16-inch deep. Tap the spur center into the slots. The first step is to enlarge the squared drawing and create a pattern for the spindle portion. You can speed up the rough-in by cutting the corners off the stock on a table saw set at 45 degrees. Rough cut the stock to round with a gouge chisel. Use a straight skew chisel to smooth up and create a straight-sided cylinder.



Mark diagonally across the ends of the block to locate the centers. Cut the corners off the turning block at a 45-degree angle on a table saw. This cuts down on the rough-into-round step.

Cut on the diagonal lines of one end with a fine-toothed saw to about 1/16" deep. Tap the spur center into the cuts.

Cut the block to round using a gouge lathe chisel, and smooth up the surface with a skew chisel.

Locate the beads and mark their locations on the block with a pencil. Turn on the lathe and add more to the pencil marks for easy definition. Use a spear-point chisel to rough-cut the beads and finish the beads with a skew chisel. Sand the turning smooth in the lathe with progressively finer grits of sandpaper cut into strips. Part the stock from the lathe with a parting tool to about

1/2-inch and finish cutting off with a fine-toothed handsaw. Cut a 3-by-3-inch square block of 3/4-inch stock for the base. Mark diagonally from corner to corner to establish the center and use a compass to mark the circumference of the base. Mount the stock on a faceplate with screws. Turn the base to round, and cut the decorative edge on it. Then, sand it smooth.

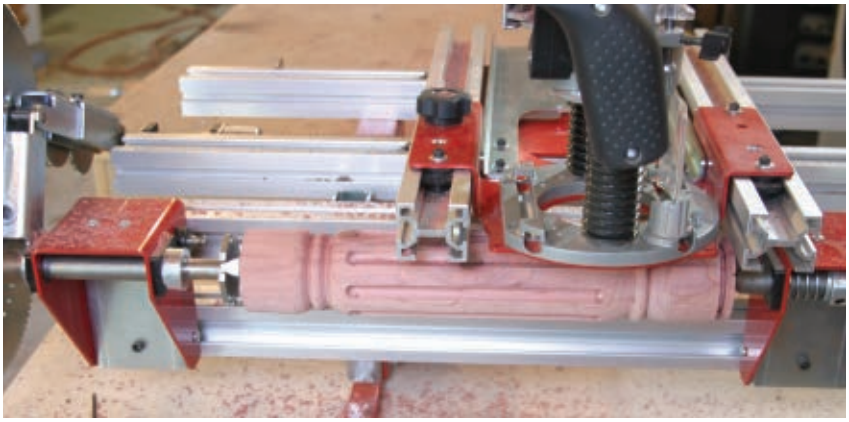
You can leave the candlestick as is, or you can flute it with a fluting bit in a plunge router and using a hand-made fluting cradle set on the lathe bed rails. The fluting shown on this project was done with the Legacy Revo milling machine, which is extremely simple and precise. The machine has an indexing head and a tail and headstock to hold the work piece between centers. Cut the top sections on a bandsaw.

Mark the locations for the grooves with a pencil.

Then cut the grooves and rounded bead with a skew chisel.

The flutes for the "column" are cut with a Legacy milling machine and router.

The machine has an indexing head that allows you to precisely cut the flutes.



Shown are the resulting flutes for the candle holder.

Fasten all pieces together with glue and apply the textured finish.

PEPPER MILL

A pepper mill is a fun, practical and challenging turning project that makes a great Christmas present. The grinding mechanisms are available from several sources, including Packard Woodworks. The mechanisms are available in several sizes, and come with full instructions for turning the mill and installing the mechanism.

This is basic spindle turning with a few added challenges. Spindle profile turning is the simplest method and a great way to learn how to turn wood on a lathe. Start with a small spindle and a soft to medium-dense wood. Walnut is a good choice. A good size is a 2-1/2-by-2-1/2-by-12-inch turning block. Enlarge the squared drawing on page 25 and create a pattern. The mill body is turned between centers. Rough cut to round using a gouge chisel and then use a skew chisel to

The bottom and top portions are turned using a faceplate to hold the stock.

smooth the cuts. Use a gouge and skew to complete the profile.

A portion of the top end must be turned down to 1-1/2 inches and will then be placed in a four-jaw chuck for boring the holes in the body. Once the body has been turned and sanded, apply a finish while still in the lathe. Apply a coat of salad bowl finish, allow to dry, buff with extremely fine steel wool and apply a second coat. Or, you can use polyurethane varnish. Once the second coat is dry, buff with a soft cloth.

Place the body in the chuck, remove the tailstock and use a work arbor chuck with a forstner bit. Position the bit in place and, turning at slow speed, use the tailstock to bore a 1-5/8-inch hole in the end. Then bore a one-inch hole as deep as you can into the body. Reverse the body and bore the top end 1-5/8 inches for the cap tenon. Then bore the hole in the body to complete the through-body hole. Use a fine-toothed handsaw or bandsaw to cut off the waste. Or, you can simply turn the body

Round the turning blank of the pepper mill using a gouge chisel.

Smooth up the round stock with a skew chisel.

Cut a shoulder on the upper end of the body using a parting chisel. The shoulder should be 1-3/4" in diameter and about 3/4" long.

Remove the blank, saw off at the shoulder and mount in a 3- or 4-jaw chuck. Turn the mill body profile using small gouges and skew chisels.

Use a parting chisel to square the bottom.

Sand the body while still in the lathe.

Calipers are used to check diameters throughout the turning process.

Then apply finish and buff while still in the lathe.

With the body still in the chuck, use a forstner bit in a work-arbor chuck to bore the holes in the mill body. Finally, turn the cap.

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and use a drill-press to bore the holes. Make sure the stock is positioned perfectly parallel to the drill by clamping with a large c-clamp.

Turn the cap with a tenon on its end to fit in the recess in the top of the body. Assemble the mill mechanism and mill according to the manufacturer's instructions.

CHIP AND DIP PLATTER

Segmented turnings are fun, eye-catching projects, and the chip-and-dip platter is a typical example of what can be done. The platter is made of maple and walnut for contrast (see page 28 for plans). The first step is to glue the large maple and walnut sections separately to create the width needed. Use Titebond III glue and make sure the boards are clamped flat and not warped or twisted. Once these boards have dried overnight, remove from the clamps and belt sand all surfaces, or run the boards through a planer to remove the squeezed out glue and create smooth, flat surfaces.

Glue the top walnut segment to the maple segment, again clamping securely and making sure the assembly is square and not twisted. Once the glue sets, cut the glued segment square. Mark diagonally across the corners to locate the center on both the walnut and the maple face. Mark the platter circumference using a compass and cut the platter circumference to shape using a bandsaw. Cut a square for the bottom walnut segment. Note that it is smaller in diameter. Locate the center of the square, mark its circumference and cut to shape. With a small square, mark across the edge of the segment at each diagonal line. This allows you to locate the smaller segment precisely on the maple segment by aligning the lines. Glue and clamp securely.

Segmented turnings using two different wood species are fascinating and fun projects. The project shown is a chip-and-dip platter using walnut and maple.

First step is to glue-up the stock, alternating walnut and maple blocks. Use a high-quality waterproof wood glue.

This is strictly face-plate turning. You'll need a sturdy faceplate and a lathe with a 14-inch turning capacity, or outboard turning capacity. The Craftsman lathe shown has a swiveling head, and with the Craftsman Bowl-Turning Rest Kit, you can create turnings up to 20 inches on the outboard. Mount the faceplate on the top or large walnut segment, making sure it is centered.

Set the lathe motor to the lowest speed—in the lathe shown, 400 rpm. Mount the faceplate on the lathe and set up the tool rest to round the platter edge. Turn the blank by hand to make sure the turning doesn't touch the rest. Turn on the lathe and round the edge with a gouge, followed by a skew to flatten it. Move the tool rest to the face or bottom side of the platter and turn the walnut "foot" to shape. Round the maple segment from the foot to the walnut face piece and sand the entire bottom side smooth.

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Remove from the lathe. Remove the faceplate from the top walnut segment and place it on the smaller bottom segment. Make sure it is centered. Remount the turning on the lathe and turn the top and inside of the platter. The finished top has a walnut outer rim with maple bottom and a walnut dish-holding rim in the center for a dip. Determine the size dish you desire to use for dip and using a pencil, mark the inner and outer sides of the dip-dish, as well as the thickness of the outer walnut rim. Use a gouge to rough cut the walnut segment. As you deepen the segment, you will need to use a bowl gouge, because a regular gouge will catch on the sloping sides as you make the cuts. Once the segments have been rough cut, use a skew to flatten the maple bottom segment and round the edges of the bowl rim and outer rim. Sand smooth, and give a coat of H. Behlen salad-bowl finish (available from Grizzly) while on the lathe using a soft rag to wipe the finish on smoothly. Allow to dry, buff lightly with steel wool and apply another coat. Remove from the lathe, fill the screw holes in the bottom with walnut wood putty and smooth. Give the entire platter a third coat of salad-bowl finish. Buff with a soft cloth.

THREE-LEGGED PLANT STAND

The plant stand shown is a fairly traditional project and quite simple. It consists of three spindle-turned legs, and a bandsawn top section. Since you will be duplicating on the lathe you can use a lathe duplicator, such as the Craftsman Copy Crafter, or make a template to follow. Enlarge the squared drawing (pg. 25) and create a template

A three-legged plant stand is a simple but fun spindle-turning project.

of hardboard or 1/4-inch thick plywood. Cut the template to shape using a bandsaw or scroll saw. Mount a block for a leg in the lathe and turn to shape, following the template. Sand smooth and finish the leg while still in the lathe. Turn the other two legs in the same manner.

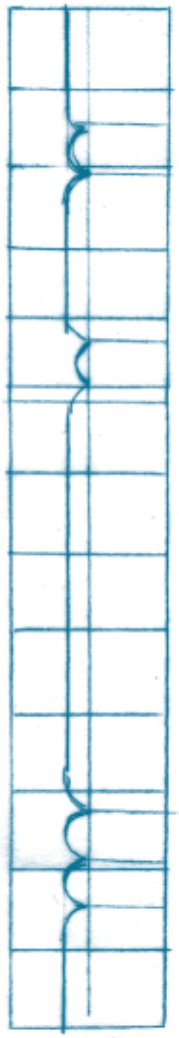
With a compass, mark the circumference of the top piece and divide the circle into three segments to locate the holes for the legs. Cut the top piece to shape on a bandsaw and sand smooth. The legs are splayed and the holes for the legs are bored in the top using a tilting drill-press table, such as the Craftsman Professional Universal Drill Press Work Center, or with a shop-made guide. The legs are held in place in the top with wedges. Using a fine-toothed handsaw, cut a slit in the top of each leg. Cut a thin walnut wedge. Insert the leg in the hole and tap the wedge in place. Repeat for the two remaining legs. Use a belt sander to cut the wedge-leg ends smooth with the top piece and sand with fine sandpaper. Apply finish.

PEDESTAL TABLE MADE WITH THE LEGACY REVO

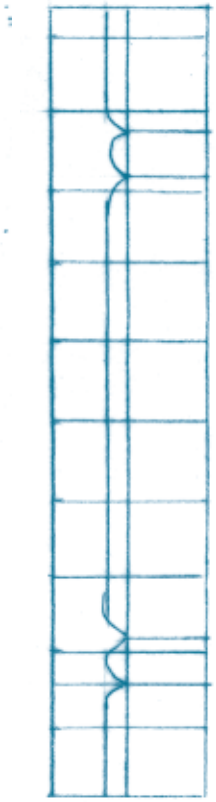
When is a lathe not a lathe? If you are intimidated by a spinning chunk of wood in a lathe, you might consider a Legacy Milling Machine. It will do almost anything you can do on a lathe and then some. Basically the machine utilizes a router and a variety of router bits, including some specialty bits designed just for the machine, to cut wood stock to shape. Bits are used to cut in the round, as well as to cut flutes, reed, and to follow a template for turning tapered and intricately formed pieces such as table legs. What's fun is creating spiral turnings, even "rope" turnings.

A pedestal table with rope-cut design has been a traditional turning project.

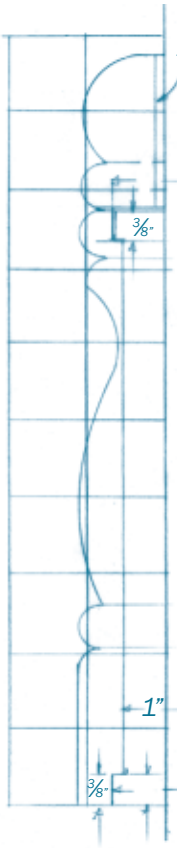
BLUEPRINTS/SPECS



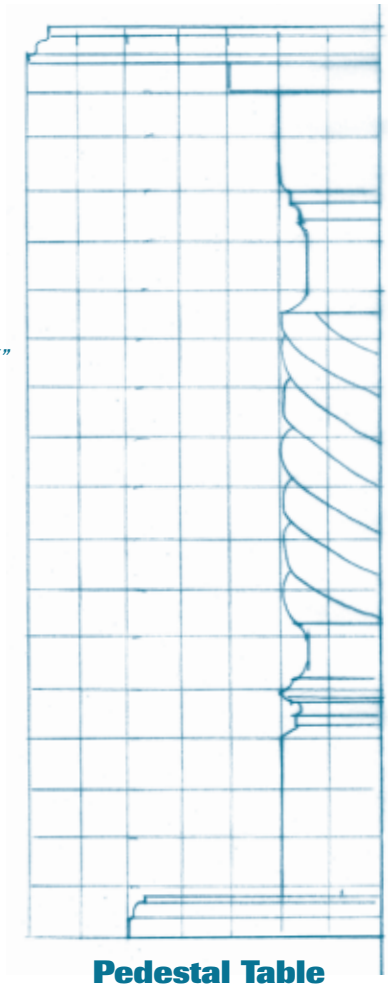
Candle Stick
1" Squares



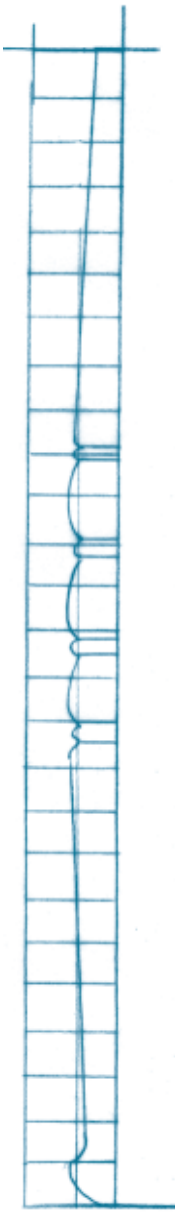
Candle Stick
1" Squares



Pepper Mill
1" Squares



Pedestal Table
1" Squares



Plant Stand Profile
1" Squares

For the fifth "lathe-turned" project we utilized the milling machine to simulate a turned pedestal table, with a rope-cut column. In the old days the column was turned into the round on a lathe, then the "rope" design cut with wood rasps and sanded smooth—a very time-consuming chore. The milling machine makes the chore quick and easy, taking about an hour to complete the column.

You will need a good quality plunge router as well as four specific router bits to create the design shown. You will need a Classical Spiral Bit, a Bottom-Cleaning Bit, a Rope Moulding Bit and a Bowl and Tray Plunge Bit.

The table column is made from a 3-1/2-by-3-1/2-by-17-inch turning block. The table shown was made from walnut, but any hard, closed-grain wood will do. Similar to spindle turning on a lathe, the first step is to make sure the ends are cut square. Mark diagonally across the ends of the block to locate the center of each end. The milling machine headstock utilizes a metal holding clamp with fingers that is screwed to one end of the turning blank. The fingers are then inserted into a mating clamp on the headstock end of the machine. The opposite end of the turning blank is held in place with a tailstock center point, much like a lathe. With the diagonals marked and the centers found, cut the corners off the blank with a table saw set to 45 degrees.

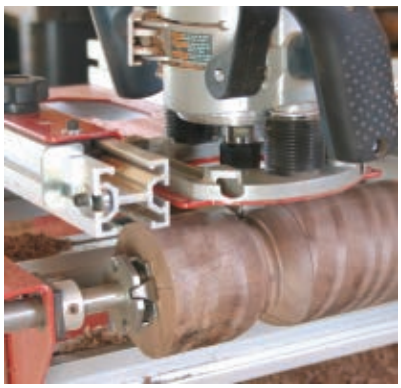
First step is to cut the blank to round. As the hand-crank is turned, the stock is turned at the same time the milling table moves the router bit across the stock surface.

The project usually requires hours of hand rasping to create the rope. The table shown was made using a Legacy milling machine and a Bosch router.

With the router fastened in place on the milling table, install the bottom-cleaning bit. Lower the router bit, lock it in place, and raise or lower the milling support guide so the bit rests on a flat area of the stock. Lock the milling support guide in place. Raise the router's plunge-depth guide about 1/8 inch. Release the plunge lever and allow the router to raise completely. Move the milling table to one end of the stock and lower the router bit to establish the starting point. Lock one of the milling table guide stop-locks in place at this location. Move the milling table to the opposite end of the stock and lock that stop-lock in place as well. Move the milling table back to the beginning and note the starting point of the table on the ruler of the support guide. Lock the milling table to the threaded rod.

Turn on the router, lower it in place and turn the milling machine hand crank. As you crank, the stock revolves at the same time the milling table moves forward, cutting off a spiral of wood to "round" the stock. Move the milling table back to the starting point, loosen the lock that holds the milling table to the threaded rod and move the milling table one inch. Repeat the cranking and routing steps until the stock is in the full round.

Remove the bottom-cutting bit and replace it with the classical spiral. Move the milling table so the center of the bit is located 3 inches from one end of the stock. Using the stop-locks, lock the milling table so it can't slide



A decorative profile is cut in each end.

Then the rope is carved.

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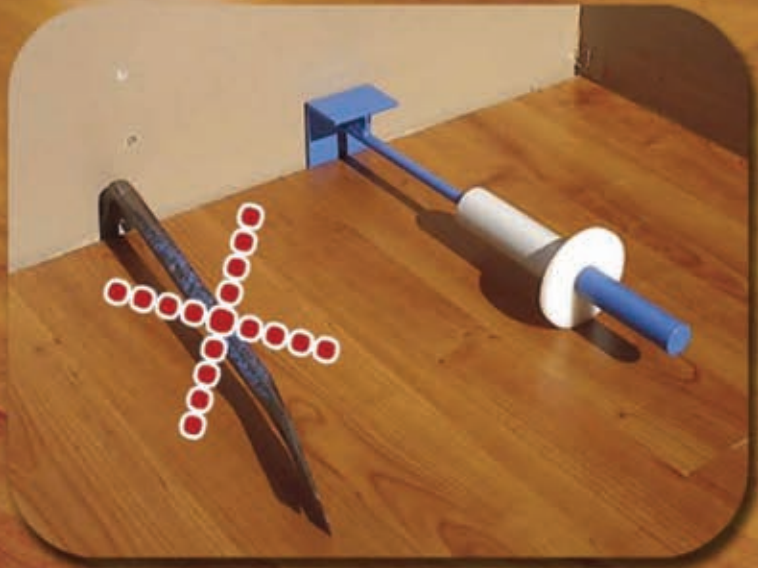

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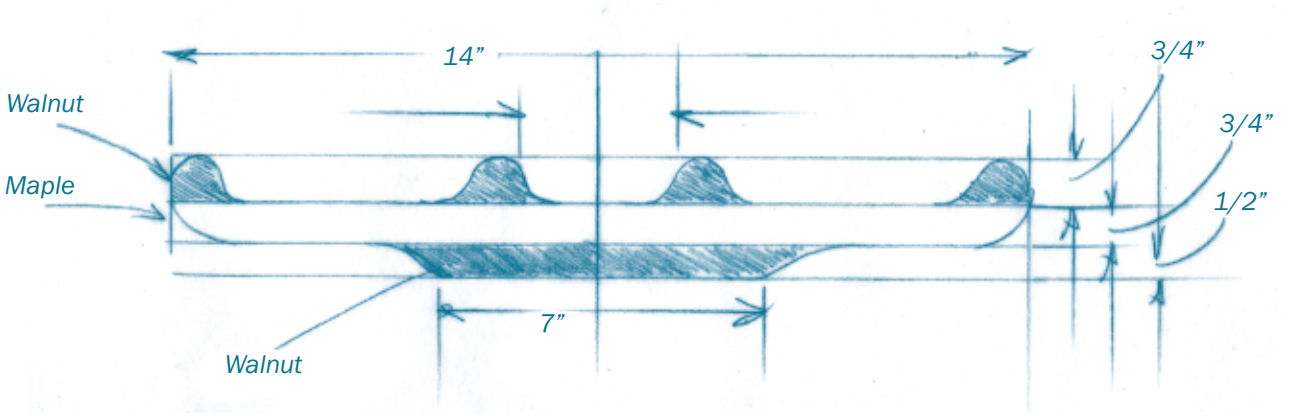
Chip & Dip Platter



lengthwise in either direction. Remove the lock to the threaded rod. Set the router bit depth to cut about 1/4-inch into the stock. Turn on the router, lower it in place and move the sliding milling table to center the router bit over the stock. As you turn the handle of the machine, the bit cuts the pattern into the stock, resembling a lathe-turned shape. Continue lowering the bit and turning the crank until you achieve the depth desired. Repeat this step on the opposite end of the stock.

Remove the spiral bit and insert the rope bit and the "magic" begins. Locate a starting point for the bit about one inch from the previously turned profile. Lock the stop-lock in place and move the milling table to the opposite end and repeat the step. Determine the cutting depth to create the "rope" and lock the router plunge depth guide in place. Move the milling machine back to the starting point and reinstall the milling table/threaded rod lock. Turn on the router, plunge to the preset depth and turn the crank to revolve the stock and at the same time move the milling table. This will create the first of three spirals utilized to create the rope design.

Again move the milling table back in place, remove the table/rod lock and move the table one inch. Lower the router bit to make sure it is correctly positioned to cut the next rope twist. Turn on the router and repeat the step to make the next cut. Repeat for the third cut.

The last step on the table column shown was to insert a bowl-and-tray plunge bit and cut a design to clean up the rope cuts. The cuts are extremely precise requiring just a little sanding to complete the column.

The table bottom, top support and top were cut to shape with a bandsaw, their edges routed and then sanded smooth. Fasten the bottom in place to the bottom of the column and the top-support to the top of the column with screws. Then, fasten the top support to the underside of the table with screws. Sand and finish to suit. EHT

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Paper Chase

How to sand and finish wood floors

By Mark Clement

Photo courtesy BHK

It never ceases to amaze me that something as rough as sandpaper can render raw wood flooring so perfectly smooth and in plane. It extra-amazes me (if someone can be "extra" amazed) when you load the heavy-grit stuff onto the heavy-weight, high-power sanding equipment to bring a raw floor surface from rough to ready.

What also befuddles me is that I tackled this job myself.

See, as a contractor, I almost always subcontract floor sanding out to a specialist contractor. Usually they can do it better, cheaper and faster than me or my crew, especially on large projects. However, this particular floor had a time budget that was running low, and rather than wait weeks for a contractor to find a hole in his schedule, I rented the equipment and tackled the job myself.

While I've sanded floors before, I learned some things on this one that can save a few headaches.

Note: You'll notice that the floor shown in the step-by-step portions of the article is not a standard floor. Instead it's top-nailed, wide plank Douglas fir barn boards. That means the photos may not look exactly like the T&G red oak or maple usually found in residential flooring, but the techniques are the same.

PREPARATION AND TIMING

Prepping a room for sanding, in my experience, is about bracing for a dust storm—both in the room to be sanded and throughout the house.

Dust. First, the room you're sanding must be empty, i.e. everything off the floor. Some sanders kick up a lot—and by a "lot" I mean a LOT—of very fine dust. That means it will settle on every shelf, picture frame and knick-knack. It may even float through the house, which is a problem you simply don't want to have, especially if you're remodeling an occupied home.

Take everything that's not nailed down out of the room. It will be faster than dusting it all and/or cheaper than hiring a maid after the fact.

Indeed, the dust collection in the sander I rented failed halfway through sanding my floor, so I not only had airborne dust, I had piles of it on the floor. Ugly. I also suggest renting or buying an air cleaner. Stick it in a doorway or somewhere else out of the way (and off the floor, of course) to chow down on dust. They work great funneling airborne particles.

Molding. It usually makes sense to remove and replace the shoe molding if you can. You don't have to, but chances are you'll hit the existing molding with the edge sander and have to fix it anyway. Plan for this. One trick is to replace painted shoe molding with a shoe that's the same species as your floor and you then finish it to match the floor. This is faster than painting and looks nice.

Timing. Be ready for the prep/sanding/finishing process to take more time and be more physically taxing than you think. You may have problems with the finish or even the rental equipment itself, which happened on my project.

TOOLS

A mix of specialty and common tools are the requirement d'jour for getting the job done.

Of course you'll need to rent a drum sander (a tool I liken to a lawnmower for floors, except that it's a lot heavier) and an edge sander (an orbital sander on wheels that looks like it mainlined sander growth hormone).

"Here's the basic protocol for sanding your floor, whether you're knocking down raw wood or stripping an existing finish."

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You'll also need a broom/dustpan combo, a good shop vacuum and a heavy-gauge extension cord. And then there's the various and sundry hand and power tools you'll need for stuff like replacing the shoe molding, setting a nail or two, etc. Having a 6-inch random orbital sander is pretty handy, too, especially if you've got stairs to tackle. Make sure you get some seriously gnarly grits for that tool before sanding. The typical selection I've seen at home centers aren't nearly aggressive enough for the heavy work of removing a floor's finish and/or heavy stock removal.

You'll also need paint brushes, the finish-appropriate applicators/handles, pails and mineral spirits for the finish and cleanup.

Renting The Sanders. Unless you're a flooring contractor, nobody owns drum and edge sanders; renting them is the only way to go. Unlike dedicated commercial sanders that run on 220 power like you may have seen on jobsites, the sanders available for rent run on 110. They don't quite have the power of a 220-powered unit, but you're not doing this work every day so the efficiency lost isn't really that measurable. I found the unit I rented had more than adequate power for the floor I sanded, which was in seriously bad shape.

Start with the roughest abrasive paper, a wood-gnawing 20 grit.

Plan ahead and reserve them for the day(s) you plan to use them. Nothing's worse than clearing out a day for sanding only to find all the sanders are already rented. And when the rental shop offers you extra paper, take it. If they don't, then request some. You may end up using it; if not, you can return what you don't use.

Also, get some help or use a weight-lifting belt. The drum sander I rented weighs about 100 awkward-to-carry pounds, and it's brutal to lug up and down stairs, in and out of a vehicle, etc. It also means that you have to be careful when you put it down. Dropping something this heavy on a finished floor is bad for both the tool and the floor. With this in mind, you can usually get a damage waiver from the rental company, which I suggest buying. Mine was on the order of 11 bucks, totally worth the peece of mind.

DAILY GRIND

Here's the basic protocol for sanding your floor, whether you're knocking down raw wood or stripping an existing finish. You'll go through this three times using increasingly finer grits of paper as you go: 20, 36, 100.

Drum First. Hit the floor with 20-grit paper to bring the floor strips into plane and/or knock down the existing urethane. You'll also want to use a dust mask and ear protection. There's dust in the air, and man are these things loud. Whoa!

Move the drum sander parallel to the wood grain, just as if you were using a belt sander. Ease the unit down and lift it gently (there's usually a lever for this; however older units require you to do it manually) to mitigate gouges where the drum contacts the wood. Also, let the unit move forward as the paper grabs the wood. Again, it doesn't prevent gouges but mitigates them.

I found it easiest to sand in one direction, i.e. in a room that runs east-west, I would start the sander on the east wall and sand a strip all the way to the west wall. Once there, I'd lift the sander from the work and then—without sanding—pull the machine back to the east wall. There, I'd position the sander overlapping my initial pass a few inches and start again. Repeat this process all the way across the floor making sure to move slowly and methodically to cover as much floor surface as possible.

Don't be frugal with the paper. Once you notice the paper has slowed its cutting speed, it's pretty

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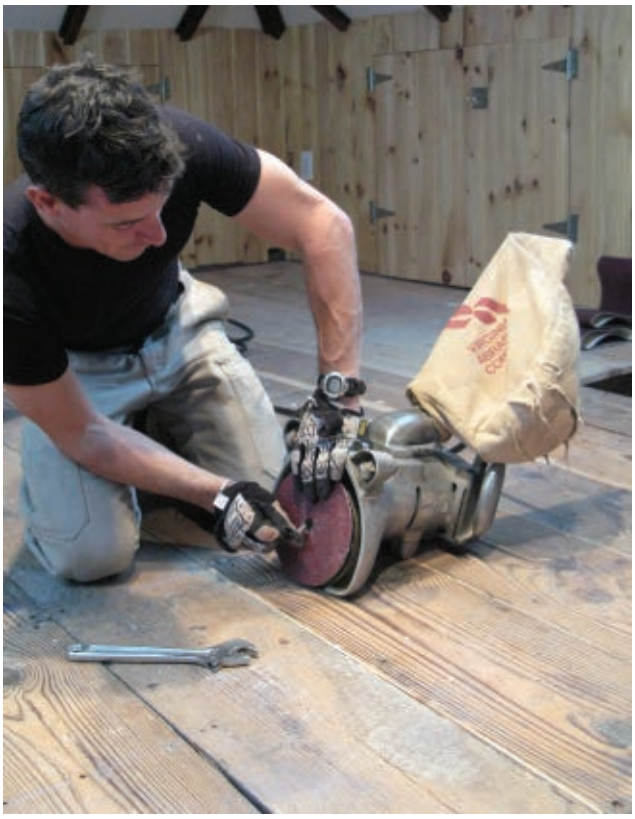
Use the edger to get where the drum sander can't go, and to feather out gouge marks the drum sander creates entering and exiting the work.

The drum sander leaves a line of gouges where it enters and exits the work. They can be difficult to see in raw wood; easier to make out in previously finished wood.



Edge again. Note that some edgers come with an on-board wrench to change out paper. Others require you to provide your own.

much worthless in my book. It has either gummed up with finish or worn such that it no longer cuts the wood effectively. Swap out for a new piece. Note: Paper isn't free by any means (you can easily drop 100 bucks or more on paper for a single room). But the goal is to get the best finish possible, and the best way I've found is to keep the paper fresh.

Edger. Once you've made a complete pass with the drum sander, it's time to use the edger to do two things: First, get the edges (duh), but also—and this is really important—smooth out the gouges left where the drum sander entered and exited the work.

The gouges will be subtle and hard to see in a raw floor (one without a finish on it). They'll be easier to make out if you're removing a finish. If you don't know what to look for, then don't be faked out and think the gouges are not there because you can't see them. They're there, running like a ragged,

NOT CREATED EQUAL

Having to sand the floor twice meant that I needed to rent the sanding equipment again. I used two different sanders from two different rental shops in my projects and found a few more time-saving tips:

All sanders are not created equal. The first sander I rented was new. It was powerful and left a primo finish. Also, swapping out paper was a breeze. The second sander I rented was an antique. It worked, but not nearly as well. Swapping out the paper took a long time and required me to dig around in the "vintage" section of my tool bags to locate my slot head screwdriver.

The punchline is this: When calling around to rent sanding equipment, ask how old the drum sander is and how you swap out the paper. A new machine will provide a nice finish faster in my opinion.

— M.C.

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round-bottomed valley right where you lifted the sander into and out of the work. Shining a bright work light on them really helps, and once you've seen them, they're easier to pick out. In this floor, they were tough to miss after the first pass.

Run the edger so it smoothes out these marks and completes what the drum sander can't access along the room's perimeter. Sweep and/or vacuum the dust from the floor between passes.

Note: Do not underestimate how important edging is. It's not brain surgery, but if you reach the end and haven't gotten the gouge marks out of the room, the finish you apply will highlight them like a Klieg light shining on a mirror—and somebody's gonna be disappointed.

Drum Again. Switch to the next finer grit of paper, 36 grit, and hit the floor with the drum again. To make things fair, I switch my sanding direction from west to east this time.

Edge Again. Switch out to 36 grit. If this were shampoo, the directions on the bottle would be "rinse and repeat." Also, if you have a foyer or landing, you may not be able to get the drum sander in there. In this case, hit it with the edger, following the grain of the material as best you can.

Seventh-Inning Stretch. Sanding requires that you are basically bent over for an entire day. It's tough on the back as I found out. I also found that periodically stretching was helpful, as was staying hydrated.

APPLYING FINISH

The world of flooring finishes—i.e. urethane—has changed a lot recently. New regulations on VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) require fewer solvents in oil-based formulae, which helped them dry faster. There are also water-based finishes that dry quickly and set up nice and hard. They're still not entirely on par with oil from a final finish perspective, but 1—they're really, really close according to manufacturers; 2—they dry a heck of a lot faster; 3—may require less sanding between coats; 4—they stink a lot less; and 5—they clean up with water. That said, I've talked with some flooring veterans, and they like oil. Water-based finishes also "amber" the wood less than oil, something worth considering.

Prep Work. Whichever kind of finish you choose, manufacturers recommend pre-treating the bare wood. For an oil-based finish a sanding sealer is recommended and it works sort of like primer for a paint project. For water-base

Cutting in the edge using a paint brush is the best way to keep from splashing urethane up onto the base trim.

Use a manufacturer-specified applicator on a threaded broom handle to apply finish to the field.

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urethanes some (not all) manufacturers recommend a water-based base coat to seal the wood. They say the reason is that many water-based finishes have a high pH level that can react with the tannins in bare wood, causing it to discolor. Other manufacturers don't require a base coat.

Dust is the enemy of a good finish. Thoroughly vacuum the floor before applying your finish coats. This means clean the vac filter—outside. I usually blast mine clean with compressed air and a blow gun. If you're using the Festool dust extractors and a bag like I did, this kind of vacuuming is practically what this tool is made for. When vacuuming, make sure you get everything you can. Be methodical here. Taking two passes isn't a bad idea at all.

Get the Tools. Once you're applying finish you're going to assuredly get urethane on your shoes. It's just the way it is. The last thing you want is to have a brush, stir stick, applicator pad, paint can opener, etc., right where you can't reach it. This can cause you to absent-mindedly trundle through your house tracking urethane behind you like a piece of gum stuck to your shoe. As you walk to your saw-dust saturated shop to look for whatever's missing, you'll

Use the drum sander to sand with the grain of the floor. Smooth and steady wins the race.

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drag no small amount of dust back with you to find an eternal home in your urethane, like a colony of Jurassic insects fossilized in amber.

I also keep my dust mask on during this step. Any part of oil-based urethane I can keep out of my system makes me happy. Water-based urethane doesn't feel—or smell—as gnarly to me.

Warning. If the words "slather it on" enter your mind, power-wash your brain. Slathering is a big mistake, especially with some oil-based products. Urethane likes to go down in nice, thin coats.

Sequence. I like to brush the perimeter of the room before hitting it with an applicator. It means I have better control of where the urethane goes, and I can get good coverage without splashing it on the wood work. Note: While you may not be able to see over-painting now, you will later, especially with oil, so be careful.

Sanding Between Coats. It depends on what kind of product you choose—oil or water—as to what kind of sanding you'll have to do between coats, or not. The key here is to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully; i.e. read the entire can. Make sure you give ample dry time between coats. Humidity and temperature can extend dry times significantly.

Professional floor guys use a buffing machine to abrade the previous finish before applying the next coat. It's a commercial machine you can rent and it's very thorough. You can also abrade the finish yourself using more sweat equity than checkbook-power by putting 120-grit or higher sandpaper on the end of a sanding pole (like drywallers use) and abrading the finish that way. You're only trying to scuff it up to accept the next coat more easily, so don't go crazy. Just make sure you cover the entire surface and then vacuum thoroughly.

Final Finish. Apply the last coat. Check the can again and make sure you give ample time for the urethane to not just dry—but cure—before moving in furniture, playing basketball or going bowling on your new, shiny, wonderfully sanded floors. **EHT**

Editor's Note: *Mark Clement is a home-improvement contractor, co-host of MyFixItUpLife, and author of The Carpenter's Notebook. Visit www.MyFixItUpLife.com.*

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'Tis the season to give tools and gadgets to your favorite DIY'er … Our staff reviewed a long list of new products to select a few that would make a nice holiday gift for your fellow home-improvement enthusiasts. From specialty tools for advanced woodworkers, to simple must-have items that every homeowner should have, we've collected some of the best of 2009.

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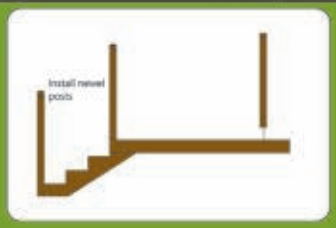

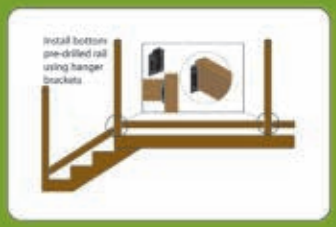

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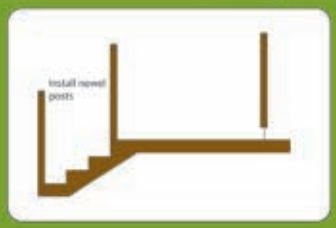

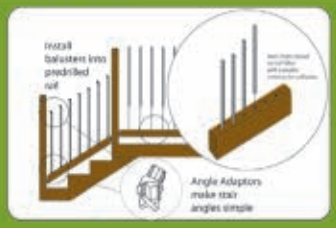

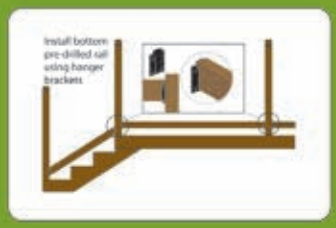

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SKIL 18V FOUR-TOOL COMBO KIT

With an MSRP at Lowe's of only $99, the new four-piece 18-volt tool kit from SKIL provides an exceptional value with a 2-speed drill/driver, multi-finishing sander, orbital jigsaw, flashlight, one battery and a charger. Additional batteries are available starting at $49.97, and all tools in the kit are also compatible with SKIL's powerful, lightweight lithium-ion battery technology. SKIL's kit is perfect for anyone just getting into power tools and wants a flexible system they can build on in the future. The 1/2-inch drill/driver features two speeds, high-speed drilling and high-torque driving. The orbital jigsaw has a built-in work light for more accurate cuts. The multi-finishing sander features a quick-change pad system for quick and easy pad changes. And the flashlight has a pivoting-head that lets you direct light right where you need it. The kit also includes 1 double-ended bit (No. 2 Philips and slotted), a fast-cut wood jigsaw blade and five pieces of sandpaper (2) 60 grit, (3) 120 grit. Visit www.lowes.com. For more information on SKIL tools, visit www.skiltools.com.

LEVEL BEST^2

The Level Best^2 combines a simple design with multipurpose functionality for all sorts of home-improvement projects. The tool is basically a durable square that incorporates level vials to read level and plumb at the same time along each leg of the right angle. It also features a ruler and pencil slot to read and mark measurements easily. Selling for only $19.95, the Level Best^2 is an ideal tool for small jobs like hanging a picture to large jobs such as building a deck. Use it to install door and window frames, to lay block foundations, or to install shelving and cabinets. Plus, with standard rise markings and standard tread markings, it is specifically designed for laying out staircase stringers. A great choice for the contractor or DIY'er, the Level Best^2 is sold in two sizes, 12-by-12- and 6-by-6-inch, and is available in three colors, as well as a metric version. Learn more at www.levelbest2.com.

HEAT SEEKER FROM GENERAL TOOLS

Homeowners have a new, inexpensive yet highly effective weapon in the war against energy costs. The new Heat Seeker (Model IRT206) from General Tools & Instruments Co. is a handheld, easy-to-use tool that can detect and help stop energy loss around doors and windows, ovens and microwaves, insulation, ductwork and other areas throughout the home. This precision tool will also accurately sense temperature differentials in electrical fixtures to help

locate and correct such hazards as overloaded circuit breakers or wiring. The Heat Seeker is a gun style, remote sensing, infrared thermometer that enables users to obtain accurate temperature readings instantaneously, without having to physically contact the object. It performs the same tasks as heat-sensing tools designed for industry that cost hundreds of dollars, but the Heat Seeker is affordably priced to appeal to typical homeowners ($65.95). Its rugged, ergonomic design features a backlit LCD display with built-in laser sighting. Just aim the laser pointer at a specific location for an instant temperature reading. For more information, visit www.generaltools.com.

GUTSTER DEMOLITION BAR

The Gutster demolition bar features all steel construction and an innovative design that make short work of almost any demo job. The chiseled points get into small spaces, under all flooring and siding materials, and easily pierces material. The Gutster's built-in raised multi-nail pullers eliminate the need to switch tools mid job. The angled lift plates give you the leverage you need to pry off flooring and roofing with ease. The head is designed to straddle joists and beams, to twist out studs and to straighten rafters. The Gutster was developed by a contractor to do more work in less time. Visit www.gutster.com for more info.

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adjustments needed. When you need an extra hand, the T-Jak makes it easier to install kitchen cabinets, drywall ceilings, door and window headers, crown molding, ridge rafters, tub surrounds and many other applications. To increase holding capacity, simply attach a 2-by-4 to the top. Also available is the Mini Brute for jobs requiring a range of 15 to 24 inches in height. Visit Patterson Avenue Tool Co. at www.tjak.com.

ROCKWELL RK9000 JAWHORSE

The Rockwell RK9000 Jawhorse is a must-have for every workshop. Professionals enjoy the increase in efficiency by minimizing the number of hands required to perform the job, and DIY enthusiasts like it for the same reason. A lock-release switch allows you to lock the material in place and easily release it with the flick of a switch. Vice jaws extend to a full 37 inches to securely clamp large materials, including a standard size 36-inch door. The tripod base provides exceptional all-terrain stability, and the front legs incorporate holes that allow you to fasten to a floor for long-term jobs. The Jawhorse has an amazing 1-ton of clamping force and it quickly folds down (no tools needed) to a compact size, weighing 43 pounds and including a wheel for even easier portability. You can take it to the jobsite or easily move it from one end of the workshop to the other. Its solid steel construction holds up under any jobsite condition. You can see the entire selection of Rockwell products at www.TylerTool.com

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Swylite offers a variety of digital wall-switch timers that combines stylish design with state-of-the-art technology. The contemporary styling provides precise, dependable control and complements all home decors, while offering the potential for significant energy and money savings. The LST100+ is the next generation of 2- or 3-way switch timers, and the LST200+ Dual Event Timer is the newest 2- or 3-way switch timer with two separate On/Off cycles within 24 hours. Both offer a

unique, soothing blue LCD backlight for ease-of-use in darkened areas or rooms, and both control loads from 1 to 625 watts, including ultra-low power compact fluorescent lamps, LED and AC Zenon bulbs. Visit www.swylite.com.

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Milwaukee Electric Tool Corporation expands its lithium-ion system with the new M12 Radio. At only 10-1/2 inches and 3-1/2 pounds, the new M12 Radio is up to 10 times smaller than existing jobsite radios, and with the first digital processor for jobsite radios it delivers the highest reception and signal clarity in the industry. More portable than any of its competitors, the new radio is a perfect solution for job sites, limited work spaces, trailers, work benches,

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maintenance vehicles and outdoor activities. In addition, premium weatherproof aluminum speakers produce a rich, full sound, while a built-in weather-sealed MP3 compartment protects MP3 players and other audio devices connected to the docking portal. Visit www.milwaukeetool.com.

CHOPSHOP SAW HOOD

The ChopShop Saw Hood was designed by a contractor for easy setup to eliminate billowing dust when using a miter saw. It also serves as an excellent protective cover when working outside in inclement weather. The unit mounts easily into the holes at

the back of your saw. The ChopShop Saw Hood works with most saws to maintain a clean work environment. Plus, it's easily portable, weighing only 13 pounds. For a limited time, Woodworker's Hardware is offering the saw hood for only $116 (price good through 12/31/09). Visit woodworkershardware.com for more information.

RAGE MULTIPURPOSE CIRC SAWS

Evolution Power Tools offers the Rage multipurpose handheld circular saw for general construction work. The Rage saw is engineered to compete with professional quality wood-cutting circ saws while offering the added ability to cut materials that simply aren't

possible with other saws. The combination of a high-torque motor and gearbox, and an ultra high-grade TCT blade enables these saws to cut steel and aluminum using the same blade. According to the manufacturer, a single blade can cut up to 164 feet of 1/4-inch mild steel before requiring a replacement. The Rage comes complete with heavy-duty carrying cases for easy portability and storage. Visit www.evolutionpowertools.com.

TUFFSHIELD FLOORING FROM RACEDECK

RaceDeck has brought together both industrial designs and architectural engineering to produce one of its toughest garage floorings, RaceDeck TuffShield. TuffShield has a high-tech diamond tread pattern that seamlessly interlocks with a 16- tab Powerlock system and is suspended by a honeycomb understructure. One of the

unique features about this flooring system is the super tough high-gloss technology that not only provides a "showroom finish" look but a strong work surface. When asked why RaceDeck felt the need to create TuffShield, Jorgen Moller, CEO of SnapLock Industries replies, "We're always looking to improve upon our products and provide our customers with only the best. With TuffShield, our customers not only get a beautiful looking floor but a strong and functional work surface." Learn more at www.racedeck.com.

RADIANT MADE SIMPLE

Radiant Made Simple RMS-11 Radiant Heat Systems provide an energy-efficient, DIY solution for heating a single zone: basements, garages, home additions,

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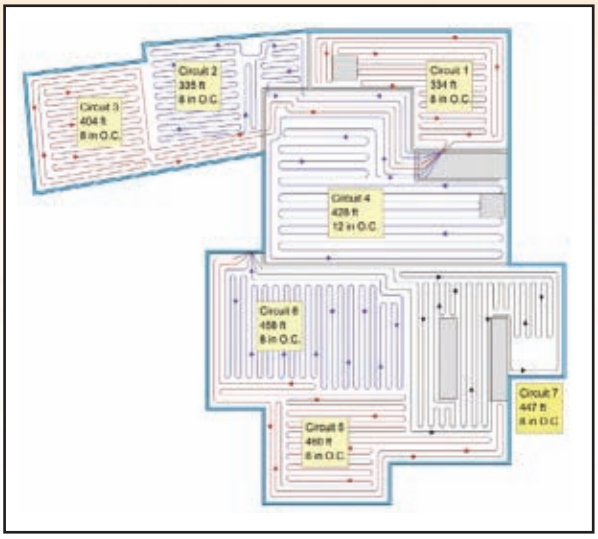

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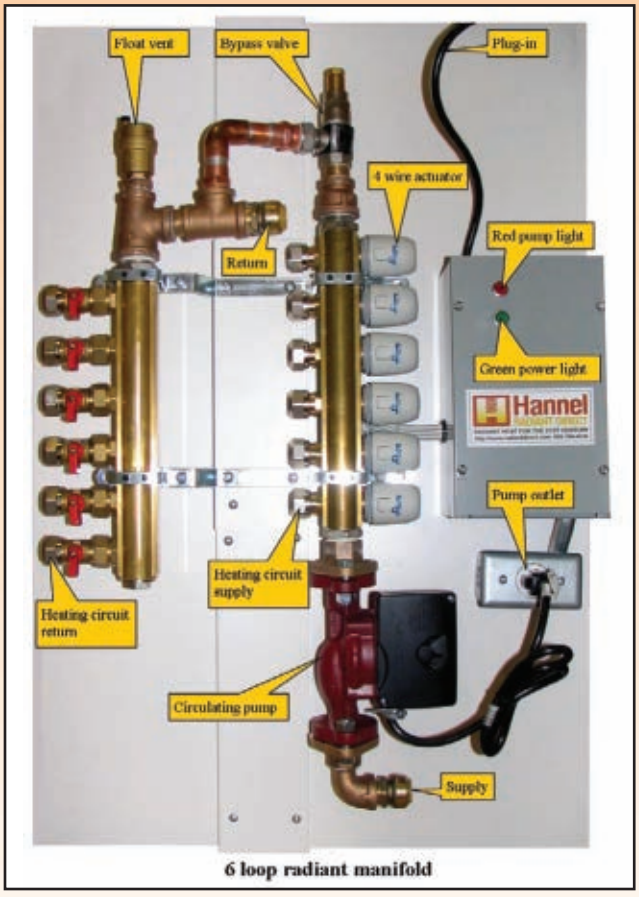

6 loop radiant manifold

Our CD-based instruction manual has 100 pages of installation instructions and diagrams. Our technicians are available via telephone to help with questions and troubleshoot your system.

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Also available is the RMS-7 system (7kW, 23,890 BTU's) as well as a 300-foot Loop Kit with PEX oxygen barrier tubing. For more information, visit www.radiantmadesimple.com.

RANDOM ORBITAL SANDERVAC

American International Tool has developed a new dust-free, high-speed random orbital sander. The 5-inch Random Orbital SanderVac Pro can be used to finish wood and fiberglass surfaces after they have been stripped. It can also be used for preparing and feathering dangerous lead-painted surfaces. The 120-volt, 6-amp SanderVac's 10,000-OPM

operating speed makes it one of the fastest orbital sanders available. The dust collector attaches to any wet/dry or HEPA vacuum to keep the operator and work area clean. Additionally, the 5-hole hook-and-loop aluminum oxide sanding pads last twice as long as standard paper pads. Visit www.paintshaver.com.

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With high-friction rubber surfaces and a durable core, Rockler's Bench Cookies are an innovative, versatile accessory

for the professional and hobbyist woodworker. They keep work pieces from slipping while routing, sanding, carving and more. The Bench Cookies raise projects from the surface of the workbench for edge work and finishing. This makes assembly and other chores easier—and they set up in seconds. The Bench Cookies are sold four per pack. Each cookie is an inch thick and has a 3-inch diameter.

SWISHER LOG SPLITTERS

When preparations for winter are underway, those last-minute outdoor chores can take up your weekends when you'd rather be watching your favorite football team. When it comes to chopping firewood, you can forget your axe; Swisher's Log Splitters are powerful and loaded with convenient features to save time and make your splitting jobs easier. All Log Splitters come with an exclusive cold weather clutch that makes cold starts simple by taking the load off the hydraulic pump. The splitters are easy to operate with top mounted, easy-to-access components and feature better cooling and

long-lasting performance with a full 5-gallon hydraulic system. Swisher log Splitters are easy to hook up for towing behind your ATV, UTV or truck. Additionally, they can switch splitting positions from vertical to horizontal without the use of tools. Seven models are available in a variety of sizes and capacities. Learn more at www.swisherinc.com.

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eliminating the need for extra support brackets. Additionally, the PVC Bracket Covers hide all hardware for a picture-perfect presence. Six- and 8-foot sections are easy to install and come in all Genovation shades of birchwood, cedar, driftwood and sandalwood. The Railing will never splinter, rot, mold, crack or warp, offering a lifetime of satisfaction. Learn more at www.genovaproducts.com. **EHT**

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Laminate countertops are attractive, affordable and you can install the material yourself.

NEW LOOK FOR LAMINATE COUNTERTOPS

An economical and popular choice for kitchen countertops is plastic laminate, available in many attractive colors and designs. Laminate countertops (often called Formica, although that is actually the name of only one manufacturer) come in just about every color and pattern imaginable. From whimsical patterns to styles that mimic popular stone looks, laminate is durable, affordable and you can install it yourself.

During the course of a recent kitchen remodel, I recovered a laminate countertop with newer, more brightly colored laminate sheeting with a granite-type pattern. This kitchen had three separate countertops, at various heights and locations around the kitchen. So I bought three new 4-by-8-foot sheets of laminate and went to work. Here's how to do it.

PREPPING AND PLANNING

If you're installing over existing laminate, the old countertop surface should be thoroughly sanded and cleaned to remove all debris and contaminants. The sanding helps to remove any existing glossy coating and roughs up the surface for better

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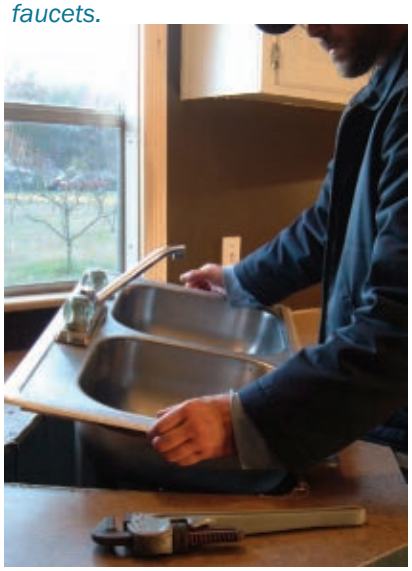
NEW LOOK FOR LAMINATE COUNTERTOPS

When installing new sheet laminate over old laminate material, first thoroughly sand and clean the old surface and remove all obstacles, such as sinks and faucets.



bonding with the countertop adhesive. I used a random orbital power sander over all existing countertop surfaces before cleaning.

Next, measure the dimensions of the countertop and sketch a diagram of the countertop shape that you're going to have to cut out of the sheet laminate. The edges of these sheets are very straight, so you should plan for the edges to line the rear of the cabinet against the wall, when possible. Take one countertop at a time and sketch its shape. As you sketch your designs, the sheet cutouts should roughly mirror the shape of the final countertop, but add a few extra inches so the sheet edges will overhang the edges of the countertop. You'll go back later with a router and trim the edges flush with the counter.

With your plan sketched out, transfer those dimensions to the sheet laminate, marking the appropriate cutlines on the material.

CUTTING THE LAMINATE

You have a couple of options for cutting laminate. There are special blades that allow you to use a utility knife to cut sheet laminate. If using a utility knife, also use a straightedge to guide the knife for a smooth and even cut. You can also cut plastic laminate with a circular saw, jig saw or table saw with a fine-tooth blade. Place a strip of masking tape where the cut is to be made to prevent chipping and make the line easier to see. When using a power circ saw or jigsaw, cut from the back side of the laminate. These blades cut on the upstroke, and cutting from the back will help prevent chipping.

Here's another tip, and also how I cut the laminate for this project: I used a fine-tooth blade installed backwards in a table saw. Now, let me emphasize that you should NEVER cut anything else with the blade on backwards other than sheet laminate. But I was told of this trick by a professional cabinet maker, and thought I'd give it a shot. And I was pleased to find that this method works like a charm. The rip guide of the table saw helps to control a straight cut, and although the cutting process takes longer with the blade on backwards, the cut was perfect. In fact, the blade

To cut the sheet laminate, I used a fine-tooth blade installed backwards on a table saw.

The rip fence of a table saw helps to guide the sheet for an accurate cut.

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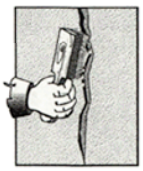
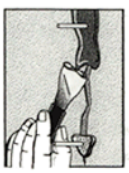
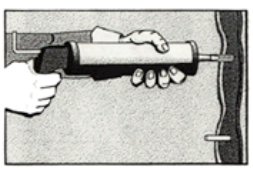


...Seal...



...Inject



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simply peels away a strip of the material in a ribbon that's as wide as the kerf of the blade, and the cuts are perfectly smooth. Granted, you'll need to set up both outfeed and lateral supports to work with the big 4-by-8 sheets, but I found this to be a great way to make accurate cuts. Once you're finished rough cutting the sheets to shape, immediately change the blade back around to its normal cutting direction.

GLUING THE LAMINATE

Plastic laminate is generally applied with contact cement. After the old countertop has been prepped (sanded, cleaned, dried), brush contact cement onto the countertop surface. Apply a smooth, even layer covering the entire surface. Then brush a layer of contact cement on the back side of the laminate cutout for the counter. Allow the adhesive to dry until tacky (usually 5 to 10 minutes, but check the contact cement label for recommendations).

At this point, place strips of wood or dowels over the countertop roughly 1 foot apart. Don't worry—the strips won't stick. The

Test-fit the laminate. In some cases, you can set the sheet in place, and use a marker to trace the shape of the countertop on the underside of the new laminate. Allow some extra room outside of your traced lines when rough-cutting the sheet

Brush on an even coat of contact cement to both the old, prepped countertop surface and to the underside of the new sheet laminate. Allow the adhesive to dry until it is tacky.

Then space dowels or wood strips, roughly 1 foot apart, over the old countertop surface.

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wood strips will act as a temporary barrier between the sheet and existing countertop. They should be long enough to extend beyond the edge of the counter so you can grab the end and pull them out later. Next, place the new sheet laminate face up on top of the wood strips. Be careful when placing the sheet; don't let the two glued surfaces touch yet or they will bond together! It's best to recruit some help when placing the laminate—I did. Even when cut to size, the material is still slightly larger than the countertop surface and difficult to maneuver without some assistance.

The new sheet should be accurately positioned right above its final installed location, "hovering" on the wood strips with its edges flush against the surrounding walls.

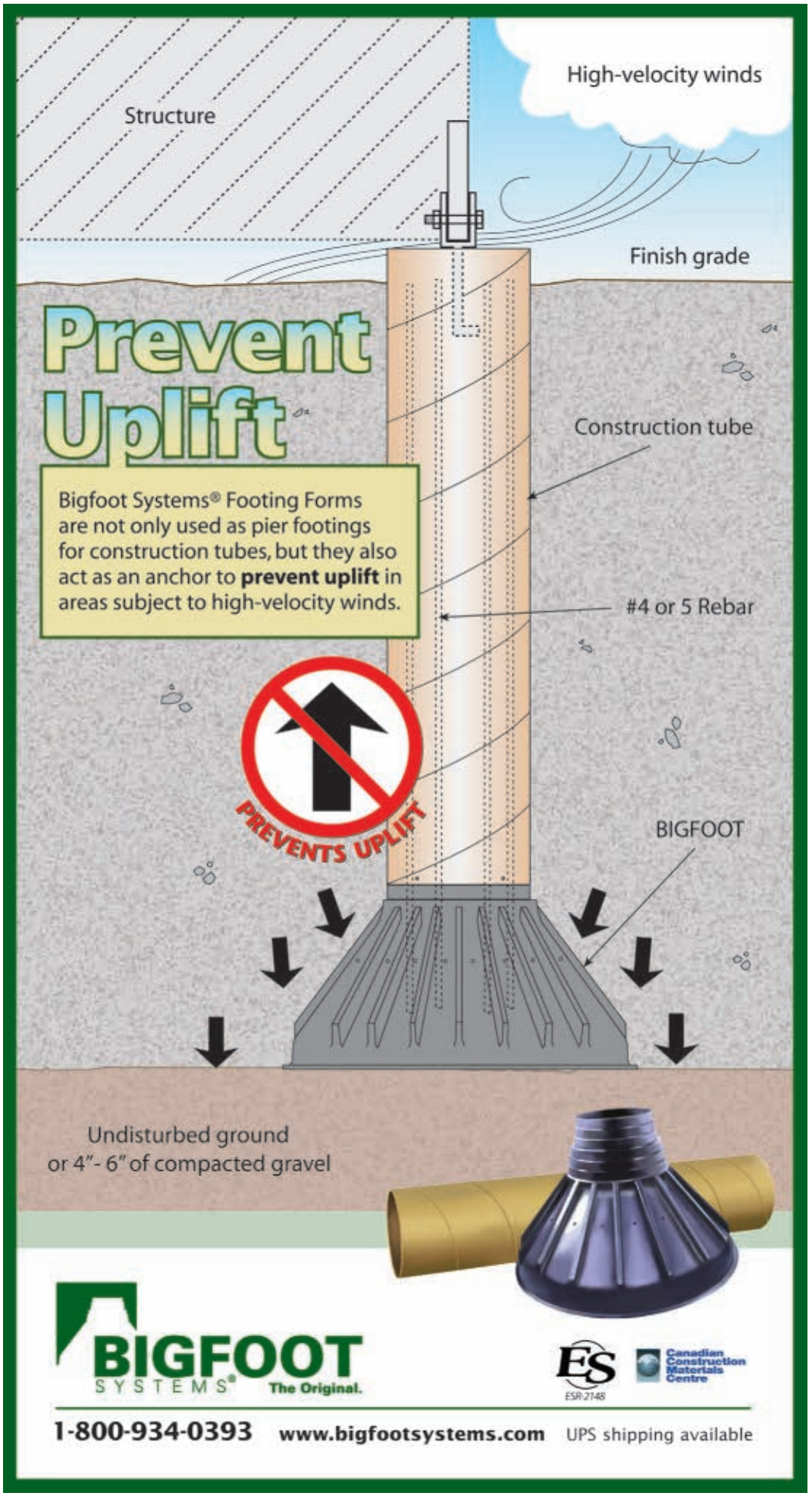
Starting in one corner, remove the first wood strip and use a j-roller to roll the sheet down onto the countertop surface.

Continue working from one end to the other, removing wood strips and rolling the top to bond the cement as you go.

APPLYING THE COUNTERTOP SURFACE

Starting at one end of the sheet, remove the first wood strip or dowel and use a J-roller to press the new sheet down onto the counter, bonding the two pieces together. Use the roller to apply pressure to the sheet so the glue will have a strong bond and no air pockets. Work toward the opposite end of the counter, removing the wood strips one at a time and rolling the entire surface thoroughly as you progress.

By the time you reach the end of the counter, the entire new laminate surface should be securely bonded. You can then go back with a router, fitted with a flush trim bit, and trim away the excess laminate overhang flush with the edge of the counter. Do not rush the router; let the tool do the work.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Tips for Installing Footings

Here are some useful tips to ensure your footings are installed properly and the integrity of your project is maintained:

- You should always make sure that a qualified engineer has designed the footing you are using and that it has been tested by an accredited evaluation firm.
- Select a footing that can carry the weight of your new construction and has met all the proper building codes.
- Ensure you are placing the footing form on solid ground. The more solid the ground the less likely movement will occur.
- Install your footings 4-6 inches below the frost line to avoid potential movement. If you are in an area without frost, the footing form should be placed two feet in the ground and then backfilled to hold it in place when it is being filled with concrete.
- Rebar is an important part of installation. Pour concrete into the footing system first, insert three or four number 4 or 5 rebar rods into the tube. To determine the length of rebar, measure the distance from the top of the tube to the air holes located on the Bigfoot Systems® Footing Form before you place the system in the excavation and backfill.
- Don't risk having to redo the job, do it right the first time!

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I used a Rotozip with a Tracing Bit to make the sink cutout. You can also use a jigsaw.

I then temporarily replaced the sink to keep the area neat and uncluttered while I finished the counter.

CUTOUTS

You may encounter obstructions such as sinks, faucets, etc. that you have to work around. For this particular project I had to remove a sink, install the laminate and then make a cutout in the new laminate to replace the sink. You can use a jigsaw with a fine-tooth blade for the cutout, but I used a Rotozip with a Tracing Bit. With a Rotozip you can easily plunge the bit through the laminate surface (no pilot hole needed). Plus, the patented Tracing Bit tip has a non-cutting "bead" at the end of the bit that avoids the object behind the surface (the high-density particleboard counter) and only cuts out the material desired (laminate, in this case). This special bit treats the underlying particleboard as a template, so you can zoom your Rotozip around the sink cutout and quickly cut the laminate to match. One note: the Rotozip is too aggressive for trimming the edges flush, so stick with a router for that chore.

EDGE STRIPS

For the most part, edge strips install in much the same way as the surface sheeting. Brush contact cement on the back of the strip and on the surface of the old countertop edge (after prepping). In this case you won't be using the wood strips. Allow the glue to dry tacky, then install the edge strip, roll it in with the J-roller, and use clamps to hold the strip firmly in place while it dries.

Another note on edge strips: Don't break the edge strip at a curve. In some cases your edge strip may not be long enough to cover the entire countertop edge, and you'll have to join two edge strips. Ideally you can stop the edge strip at a corner and begin the second strip on the other

Use a router with a flush trim bit to cut the laminate to match the counter.

Cut the edge strips to size, and glue them in place with contact cement in the same manner that you glued the countertop surface (but without the wood strips).

side. However, what if you don't have corners? One of the countertops in this project had a sweeping curved edge that rounded three sides of the counter—too long for a single edge strip. When joining two strips, break the strips at a long, flat area of the edging, rather than at a curve. The edge strips have a tendency to straighten out, and you'll find it difficult or even impossible to get the edging to stay glued in place if you break it at a curve. Curves should happen in the middle of the edge strips.

Once the edge strips are securely bonded, just remove the clamps and trim in the edges with a router and flush trim bit. With bits that use a guide wheel, carefully set the guide so the bit cuts only the edge of the laminate but not the adjoining countertop surface. You can then go along the edges with a half-round file to slightly bevel the transition between the countertop surface and the edge strips. You can also

SEAMING LAMINATE

This project did not require me to seam the laminate because each of the three countertops fit within the footprint of the 4-by-8-foot sheets. This won't always be the case with an installation. Sometimes the counter will be too large and you have to join two sheets. Here are a few tips on seaming the laminate:

1. First bond the larger sheet in place like normal.

2. Put a narrow strip of wax paper down along the edge of the larger piece.

3. Use wood strips to keep the second piece away from the cemented surface of the counter.

4. At the seam, position the second piece tightly flush against the first piece, on top of the wax paper. Tape the second piece to hold it in place.

5. Roll the second piece down as usual, removing the wood strips as you progress.

6. Once the second piece is securely bonded in place, lift the edge covering the wax paper. Remove the paper and use your J-roller to roll from the middle of the second piece toward the seam, bonding the seam tightly.

use a special laminate filler to doctor up any nicks or other minor damage.

After doing this to three countertops, the kitchen looked much better. I used a solvent to remove the excess contact cement. I then added a simple tileboard backsplash with a small PVC trim strip at the bottom (for water resistance), and the countertop job was complete. **EHT**

Instead of using wood strips or dowels for the edge strips, roll the strips down with a j-roller and then clamp them in place until the adhesive sets.

After flush-trimming the strips with a router, slightly bevel the countertop edges with a half-round file.

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2. Install galvanized 2-1/2-pound or heavier metal lath over the barriers. Eighteen-gauge woven wire mesh may also be used. Be sure to attach the metal lath with the small cups pointing upward. Double-wrap the metal lath a minimum of 16 inches around all inside and outside corners.

3. Apply a 1/2-inch scratch coat of mortar over the metal lath and allow to dry completely, 24 to 48 hours.

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this fireplace, Type N mortar is suggested with the following mix: Two parts Type N masonry cement, three to five parts masonry sand and water. Type S mortar can also be used as an alternative with three parts Type S masonry cement, five to seven parts masonry sand and water. Pre-mix mortar can be used as long as it's specified for use with stone veneer. A Portland cement mix is suggested for joint-less/dry-stacked stone veneer applications.

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5. Lay out at least 25 square feet of stone to give yourself a selection to choose from. Try to achieve a balanced pattern of shapes, sizes and colors by selecting pieces from different boxes throughout the installation.

6. To apply stones, gently wet the scratch coat first. With a mason's trowel, apply a 1/2-inch thick even layer of mortar to the back of the stone.

7. Corners are installed before flats for easiest fitting, working from top down. (Installation is

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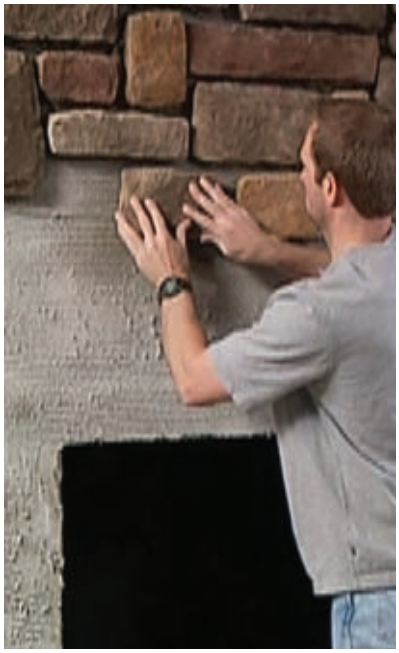
Color Savvy

bottom-up for dry-stack installations.) Press the stone firmly into place on the prepared surface, squeezing the mortar out around all edges.



8. Gently wiggle the stone while pressing to ensure a good bond.

9. Stones can be cut or shaped using a hatchet, wide-mouth nippers or mason's trowel edge. Straight cuts can be made with a diamond or carbide saw blade. Any cut edges should be turned so they're not visible—down when below eye level and up when above eye level.

10. If the stone is being installed in a hot/dry climate or onto a very dry surface, the stone and surface should be wet to prevent excess absorption of moisture from the mortar. Spray or brush water onto the back of the stone and the wall surface, or dip the stone into a container of water. Let any excess surface water dry off for a couple minutes prior to placing the stone. For dry-stack applications, stones will need wetting regardless of weather conditions.

11. After the stone has been applied, use a grout bag to fill the joint with mortar, forcing grout into any voids. Be careful not to smear any grout onto the stone face.

12. Any mortar accidentally getting onto the stone should be allowed to set and then be brushed off once dry with a whisk broom.

13. When mortar joints are firm, after about 30 to 60 minutes, use a metal or wooden striking tool to rake out the excess mortar to the desired depth. At the same time, force the mortar into the joints to thoroughly seal the stone edges.

14. Loose mortar and mortar spots which have set for only a few hours are easily removed—never let them set overnight. Avoid using wet brushes or sponges to wipe the joints or clean mortar off the stone face as it will smear and stain. Also, never use wire brushes or acid on the stone surface. **EHT**

For more information on StoneCraft products, visit www.stonecraft.com.

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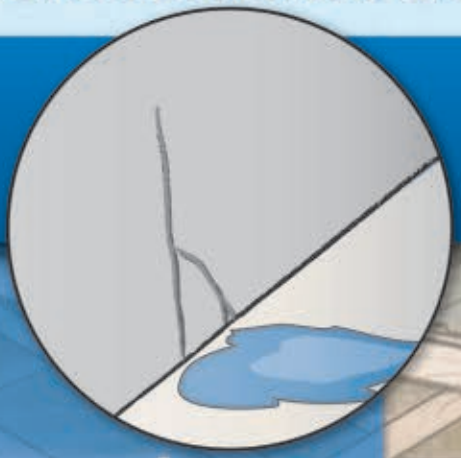
WATERPROOFING



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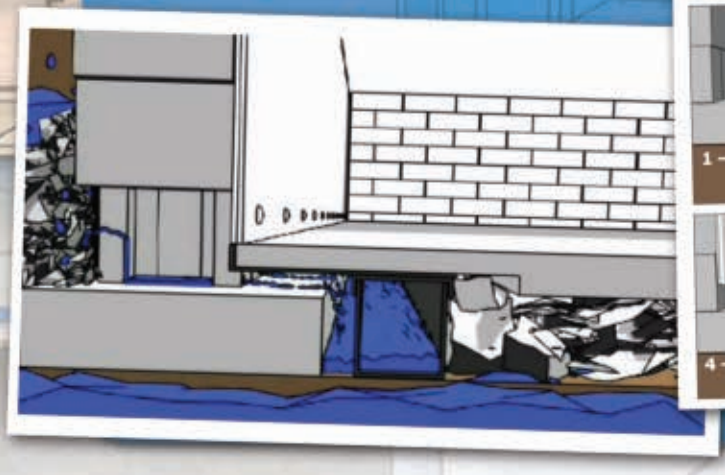

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How Can Energy-Efficient Windows Save Me Money?

In 2009 and 2010, you can receive up to $1,500 in federal tax credit for replacement windows that meet government requirements.

By Kathy Ziprik

As the weather turns chilly, many homeowners are asking the question, "How can energy-efficient windows save me money?" Christopher Burk, product manager with Simonton Windows, tackles this question—and several other window inquiries—while offering sound advice for consumers.

Q: How can energy-efficient vinyl replacement or new construction windows save me money?

A: Vinyl windows with energy-efficient glass packages can dramatically help prevent the natural transfer of heat and cold into your home during various seasons of the year. By controlling this natural conduction, you can better manage the comfort level in your home. You can save money—and realize a significant return on investment—by lowering the amount of energy it takes to heat or cool your home throughout the year.

Q: When should I replace the windows in my home?

A: Just like roofing and siding on your home, windows need to be replaced every 20 years or so. Make it a part of your yearly home maintenance checklist to carefully evaluate your windows. Older windows can lose efficiency, causing heating and cooling bills to rise. When it's time to replace the windows, research upgraded window packages that are ENERGY STAR® qualified that can help lower your monthly energy bills.

Q: How do I evaluate my windows?

A: To determine if your current windows are energy-efficient, Simonton recommends a few easy do-it-yourself steps:

• Look for condensation between the panes of glass on double- or triple-glazed windows. This could indicate seal failure. If this is the case, you might need

ENERGY-EFFICIENT SIMONTON WINDOWS CAN HELP KEEP MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET.

Help reduce heating and cooling costs, increase your curb appeal and help boost your tax return. The new U.S. government stimulus plan provides up to $1500 in tax credit to homeowners for installing energy-efficient replacement windows – which makes this the perfect time to purchase Simonton windows!

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For details, visit **simonton.com/taxcredit/eht** or **call 800.746.6686.**

to replace the glass or the entire window.

• Check to see if there are any "burnt out" areas on your carpets and furnishings where harmful ultraviolet rays have damaged the interior of your home. This is an indication that your windows need spectrally selective Low E glass to block the sun's harmful rays.

• Research to determine if you have the appropriate glass package for where you live. For example, if you live in a cooler northern region you'll find increased performance in the insulation properties of a low U-value. If you are located in a warmer region you'll benefit from a lower solar heat gain coefficient to help keep the sun's heat from entering your home. For more information, visit www.energystar.gov.

Q: What window frame type is the most energy efficient?

A: Vinyl frames with multi-chambered construction and fusion-welded corners are one of the most energy-efficient available. Vinyl frames are especially effective when combined with a Low E glass package.

Q: What kind of glass should I ask for in replacement windows?

A: At a minimum, you'll want to start with Low E glass in your window. Then, request a dense, harmless (and odorless) gas fill, like Argon or Krypton, be inserted between the panes of glass. This gas fill acts as a type of barrier and helps prevent the transfer of heat or cold into your home. Controlling the amount of convection between the panes of glass will help you use less energy to heat or cool your home.

The Department of Energy reports that vinyl windows reduce heat loss and increase thermal efficiency.

Q: Why should I consider vinyl framed replacement windows?

A: Vinyl replacement windows are durable and help you lower monthly energy costs, increase the value of your home, reduce maintenance hassles and add beauty to the interior and exterior of your home. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the typical home loses more than 25 percent of its heat through windows. The DOE reports that vinyl windows have moderate to high R-values, a measure of both the construction of the window and the materials used versus heat flow. That translates into reduced heat loss and greater thermal efficiency

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Vinyl replacement windows can be custom made to fit your design and remodeling requirements.

that can help you save money and reduce energy costs.

Another reason to consider vinyl replacement windows is that they can be custom made to fit your design and remodeling requirements.

Q: Why should I be considering replacing my windows right now?

A: You can gain immediate savings on your energy bills starting the day your new energy-efficient replacement windows are installed. And, right now, you can receive up to $1,500 in federal tax credit when replacing windows in 2009 and 2010 that meet certain government requirements. The windows must have a U-factor rating of 0.30 or less and a Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC) of 0.30 or less to qualify for the federal tax credit.

Q: What kind of glass packages does Simonton offer that meet the requirements for the federal tax credit?

A: Simonton Windows' Energy Tax Credit (ETC) glass packages are guaranteed to meet the U.S. government requirements for the energy tax credit. For details and information, visit www.simonton.com/taxcredit.

Q: Where can I learn more about energy-efficient windows?

A: There are many resources available to homeowners. Visit the ENERGY STAR site at www.energystar.gov, the Home Energy Saver at http://hes.lbl.gov/, Efficient Windows Collaborative at www.efficientwindows.org or American Architectural Manufacturers Association (AAMA) at www.efficientwindows.org. EHT

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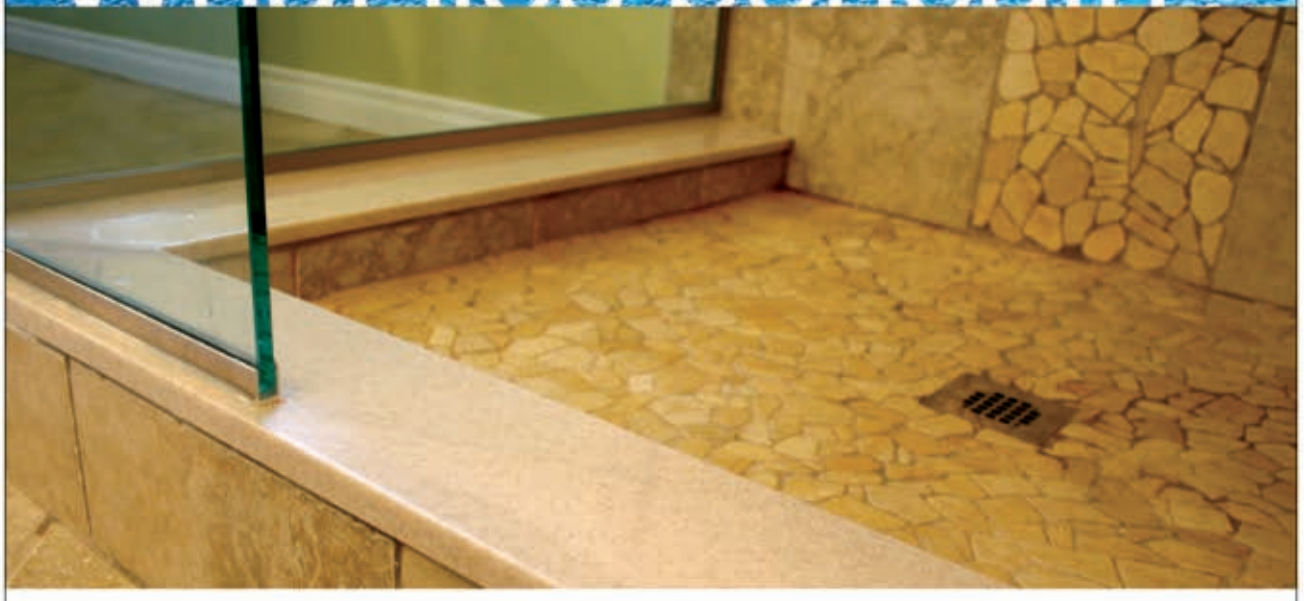

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